# MEDITATIONS
ON THE
# LORD'S PRAYER

REV. J. G. H. BARRY, D.D.

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*By the Rev. J. G. H. Barry, D.D.*

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## ON THE
# LORD'S PRAYER

BY

THE REV. J. G. H. BARRY, D.D.

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*The First Meditation*

## OUR FATHER

Let us listen to

The voice of the disciple: "Lord, teach us to pray."

The voice of Jesus: "When ye pray, say, Our Father."

Let us try to picture the scene:

The scene comes to us best if we picture a place isolated from human habitations. S. Mark tells us of such a withdrawal. "And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while." A desert place, a lonely spot. It was, it may be, a mountain side from which they could look out over the sea of Galilee and see the splendor of the sunset clouds reflecting in still waters. Or we may think of some secluded valley where the "many coming and going" would not find them. Our Lord had with-

drawn from them a little and had been praying. Try to see what they saw: Jesus Christ kneeling in prayer. His human nature needs the rest, the refreshment, the communion with the Father, that prayer is. He was absorbed in private, silent prayer. But we may be sure that he was not praying for himself alone. We rather think of that recorded prayer: "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me: for they are thine. . . . I pray not that thou should'st take them out of the world, but that thou should'st keep them from the evil." The sense of his mission was always with him, the strength he sought was the strength to carry that through. Think of his life as a life of prayer. Realize how necessary the time of retreat, the lonely place, was to him. His experience is unfolded for us from that first retreat of forty days in the wilderness when he fought that initial battle with Satan, to that last struggle under the cedars of Gethsemane. We touch the edge of a great mystery—the Persons of the Blessed Trinity are revealed to us as leaning on one another in their action.

Consider, first—

How necessary for us is the lonely place, the time of retreat. We understand the theory of this; but we so often say, "I have no time." One is tempted to say that there is no time for anything else until this is done, because nothing else can be rightly or effectively done save it rest on the basis of communion with God. "Pray without ceasing" is possible as the extension of our time of communion, of retreat. The energy there gained is expended at other times. The hold we take upon God tends to be relaxed when we come into contact with the world. This contact with the world we are inclined to put first. We call it the "realities of life," but the realities of life are its spiritual foundations, the elements in it which give life its profound significance. Consider that a human life is in a constant state of transition; it is not a static existence, but is pressed upon from all sides by manifold influences. It cannot avoid this. It must constantly change, physically, mentally, spiritually. This change we control. It may be deterioration. We may fall into that state which is described as "dead in trespasses and sins." We may earn

the wages of sin which is death. But the will of God is our sanctification. It is that "we grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Life is perpetual growth from grace to grace. This divine ideal cannot be realized save by concentration upon its means; and this concentration requires the "lonely place," the retreat and all that can be learned from it in the way of spiritual skill. "How to pray," in any deep sense of the word is not easy of accomplishment. Prayer is simple so long, and only so long, as it is superficial.

Consider, second—

What is your own experience in prayer? How far have you progressed? We are all sure of this: that however far we have progressed, there is still open territory before us. Climb as we may we never quite reach the mountain top. We can say with S. Paul, "I count not myself to have apprehended." Fortunate are we if we can go on with him: "this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I

press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

In particular, we must ask ourselves: what use have I made of meditation and retreat? Human sloth makes it so easy for us to yield to the initial difficulties. But assuming these to have been overcome, that we have found time and opportunity, there arise other difficulties in the very "lonely place" itself—the difficulties of putting aside thronging thoughts that we have brought in with us, and concentrating on the purpose that has brought us here. "Lord, teach us to pray"—that is what we are here for. We must surrender our minds utterly to him. How can he teach the half-surrendered spirit? How can he enter if we keep the door closed, or even half-opened? Learning means first of all listening. The guidance of the Teacher is all important.

Consider, that you are here now primarily as a listener. "Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." Hearing, in our Lord's sense, means

not just listening but understanding; concentrating our minds on what is said, and bringing it into relation to our lives; translating truth into action. "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Prayer which does not aim at action of some sort is futile.

Let us, then, pray—

For the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Pray that He may stimulate and control our thoughts.

> O God, who hast bidden us to worship thee in spirit and in truth, shadow us with the power of thy Holy Spirit; let thy mercy and the promised grace of thy salvation come upon us, that our prayer may be directed unto thee by Him through whom we believe our sins to be forgiven.

We approach God on our knees. With reverence. "When ye pray, say, Our Father."

Reverence is the natural expression of a

Christian conception of God, God's majesty —splendor—glory. It is thus that God manifested himself to Isaiah. "Above it stood the Seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain did he fly. And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." It belonged to the mission of Christ to "shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting."

This is not fear but an overwhelming sense of awe. This is what S. John experienced. "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." Our translation of the Bible often gives us a wrong impression by its use of the word fear. We are not to fear God unless we are conscious of having deeply offended against his known will; but we approach him with a deep sense of what he is. "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

This sense of awe controls our attitude in prayer and meditation. We begin with an act of recollection. We strive to preserve this recollected spirit. Our feebleness often defeats our purpose. Let us remember that our minds instinctively turn to what we are interested in. But our deepest interest—God and our relation to him is often not our foreground interest. The secret of effective meditation is that we make it such.

It helps us if we recall our right of approach. Revealed religion means that God is interested in us: is seeking and calling us. The fact that we are sinners must not be permitted to block our approach. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. While we were yet sinners Christ died for us. The word with which our Lord opens his prayer —Father—is a word of beckoning love.

Here in the wording of the prayer is another indication of our proper prayer-attitude. We do not approach God as isolated individuals, but as members of a community—a society—a body. Life involves relations of all sorts and of infinite complexity. Remember at the outset that we are handicapped by our inheritance. We are Americans, that

is, extreme individualists. Nothing so gets in the way of religious understanding and expression as individualism. We must, if we are to make anything of religion, think in terms of our relations—relations and responsibilities to God and man. "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own! For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's." "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Emphasize this: if one member suffer the other members suffer with it.

This typical prayer then is a prayer of *unity*. The basis of unity is twofold.

I. Our common nature. God, who is our creator, is also the All-Father. Therefore nothing human is alien to us.

II. Our regeneration. We are born into a natural state. We are reborn into a supernatural state. God's child is now a new creation. The fatherhood of God carries a new connotation.

As Christians, it is this latter relation that we dwell upon. We approach God as those

whom he has new-made. We are born of water and the Spirit. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

What is implied in this is brought out in our church catechism: member, child, heir. We have been initiated into that supernatural society which is the Body of Christ. We are made one with him. We are "in him." This work which is wrought at our baptism is the most important fact about us. We have been made "partakers of the divine nature." This is what is meant by Christian character: that radical change which was wrought in us by baptism and which can never be obliterated. No man can be rebaptized.

And because we are members of Christ, who is God's Son—"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, of his bones"—we are

in consequence children of God who is Christ's Father. And each one, individually, *the* child of God. Children by adoption—yes; but by no merely legal or nominal relation, but by participation of nature.

Accordingly, therefore, we are heirs of God. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him." "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and according to the promise." "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world; but when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." We have achieved a status by which we are entitled to certain privileges and graces.

That God is our Father implies on his part interest in us. The God of philosophy, of

human speculation, is a mere abstraction. The God of revelation is a creator who has an abiding interest in his works. He must be conceived as constantly present and active in all his creation. The nature of that activity, as revealed to us by Christ, is summed up in the word love. God is love. He for us became Incarnate Love. He loved us and gave himself for us. It is only thus that we can conceive love—as action. And therefore as Providence.

This fatherly love of God is also the power of God. We do ill to conceive the power of God as force. Much harm has been done by misunderstanding our Lord's words—"Compel them to come in." The compulsion that God exercises upon men is the pressure of ceaseless love. The interpretation is luminous in the sacrifice of our Lord. Power was at hand—unlimited. "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than ten legions of angels." But that is not the path of love. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

Constantly our impatience asks, why does not God act? But he is acting—only he will

not act in our impatient human way. Ultimately he will put all enemies under his feet, even that last enemy which is death. But he will do it, not by force, but by the pressure of love. The world waits and agonizes and loses faith because it will not understand and use this divine method. And by its own method it constantly defeats God's purpose and puts off the day of his triumph. Our state is hopeless until we discern the divine method. In the meantime God can only pity our stupidity.

Those who do in some degree understand it can only exercise it fragmentarily. It can only be fully exercised through coöperation.

We get therefore to personal application. Am I coöperating with my Father in heaven in carrying out his work here in this world? Has there gone on—is there going on—a refashioning of our nature? "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

The response of the child to the love of the Father. In what degree have we responded?

Are we seeking to deepen our response?

Again recall, that this is a social response, a response in and through a society. My life acts on other lives and they react upon mine. Is this action and reaction stimulative of love?

Now follow our Lord's direction and say, Our Father, making an act of reconsecration to him and an act of union with him, and a resolution to be guided in all things by the example of his love.

*The Second Meditation*

## WHO ART IN HEAVEN

Let us listen to the words of our Lord:

Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Let us picture—

Heaven as it is revealed to us through the eyes of S. John. S. John tells us that he was in the Spirit, and we know that these things are spiritually discerned. What was made known to S. John he transmits to us in vivid impressions of light and color and sound. We see a throne that "was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne; and he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads

crowns of gold and out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God." We see the prostrate worshippers, and their song drifts out to us. "And they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou art slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hath made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." We see the Lamb, and again music. "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on Mount Zion, and with him a hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as of the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sang as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth." There are yet other visions and voices. "I saw as it

were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints. Who shall not fear thee, oh Lord, and glorify thy name?" We look into the future and behold the triumph. "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and the voices of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were past away; and there was no more sea. And I, John, saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for a husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with man, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Consider, first—

This world of color and light and song, of symbols of spiritual realities, is the heart of the universe, God's home, his manifestation to his elect in the Beatific Vision. From that world the spiritual influences emanate which aim at the transformation of this world of ours. There is a true sense in which that world interpenetrates this world. It is not a world vague, distant, detached, but a world present and operative for us to an extent—to the extent to which we are willing that it should operate. Instead of thinking of it as a possible future but at present negligible, we should think of it as a world of possible present contacts, of formative influences in our lives. These chanting choirs, the music of whose hymns sweeps over the sea of glass, clear as crystal, and about the altar of the Lamb, and the throne that is high and lifted up; these processions of the elect which pass

through the streets of gold, bordered by the Trees of Life; the dwellers in this city of jasper walls and gates of pearl, whose foundations glow and sparkle with the splendor of varied gems,—these are our friends, fellow-members of the same Body. The difference is that while we are toiling up the steeps of the Pilgrim Way, they, having fought a good fight and kept the faith, have attained the crown. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day: and not only to me, but also to all them that have loved his appearing." They have so run that they have attained. Today with all sympathy and love they watch us who fight the fight of faith here and strive to lay hold on eternal life, ready to help us with the strength of their intercessions. And we join with them in their worship of the Lamb, who ever liveth to make intercession for us.

Consider, second—

What does heaven mean to you today? To God's saints it has been ever an eagerly an-

ticipated goal of their ambitions. They have felt life to be tolerable because it is the appointed field of their preparation for the future, the place of their trial and testing, the training ground of their spiritual powers. But ever the vision has floated before their entranced eyes. Ever have they eagerly waited the end of their probation, the moment of their release to a fuller life. Death holds for them no terrors, because it is through the grave and gate of death that they pass to their joyful resurrection. They know that to depart and be with Christ is far better, even while they are conscious of the mission they are fulfilling for him here. But all the time their eyes strive to penetrate within the veil and their ears are alert to catch the echo of the heavenly music, and in their devotions a divine nostalgia engulfs them and their hearts faint with the thought of the joys of the Home.

Have you any sympathy with these longings of God's saints? Is it true of you that you are so satisfied with what this world has to offer that you cling to it and shrink from the thought of leaving it? Does death seem to you loss rather than gain? Do you look

back rather than forward? Is it perhaps true that your heart is not set upon righteousness and all that that involves; that your religion is not really the essence of your life, but a garment that were easily removed; that to "depart" is to be faced as the unavoidable and therefore with whatever of heroism you can summon, and not with a passionate longing for what is far better?

Let us then pray—

That we may lay up our treasure in heaven and that where our treasure is, there may our heart be also.

O Christ, the Power of God and the Wisdom of God, who for us men and for our salvation didst come down from heaven, and deigned to be clothed with our human flesh that thou mightest associate us with thy Divine nature, and raise to immortality by thine Ascension that mortal robe that thou didst descend to assume; grant that we who rejoice and desire to follow thee in thine Ascension, may at thy second coming receive the consolations of eternal joy.

We think in terms of time and place—there seems no way of avoiding that, for the common man at least. Spiritual realities are of necessity presented to us in the form of symbols and pictures. Hence it is that we think of heaven locally, and its realities are presented to us in terms of joy and beauty.

We need not be disturbed by the "materialism" of such presentation. We can easily understand the symbols. They are symbolic expressions of the highest values we know, as these values have attained ideal presentment. The highest values we know are truth, goodness, beauty. Here we know them only partially; we struggle for their attainment. More often than not we concentrate on one to the neglect or exclusion of the others. The scientist and his disciples insist that the end of life is the pursuit of truth—often one infers that to them both goodness and beauty are of minor importance. The artist says of a work, "It is beautiful; why ask if it is anything else?" To certain men whose hearts are really set on righteousness, it would seem that beauty is suspect or at least negligible.

But the fact is that none of these values is independent or can attain complete expres-

sion by itself. Complete truth will be both beautiful and good. Goodness is always beauty, and impossible divorced from truth. There is a possible fascination in the presentation of evil, but evil is the negation of good and can never be truly beautiful. It is always defective.

Heaven is the complete expression of these values. In God's presence they expand into perfection. Heaven is not only presented to us as a perfect state, but it is negatively characterized by its exclusiveness. "And there shall be no curse any more. . . . And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever." "Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolators, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie."

Therefore the life that aims at perfection will be characterized by exclusiveness. It will exclude all that we sum up by the word sin.

It will also exclude a certain amount of possible experience, not because it is evil, but because of lack of room. Life means selection. And when we have selected the best

there is little room for the second best. The truth involved in this statement is one of the most practical truths for the development of the spiritual life. Because it is so little understood and stressed, the common man is perpetually perplexed as to standards of conduct. Yet it ought to be a commonplace. Success in any sphere of life is conditioned on exclusiveness—the elimination of things that interfere. I have just met an ideal illustration. A young professional man, approached as to religion, said, "If one aims at a position of leadership in my profession, even fifteen minutes a day is important." He had no time for religion. The failure of the average member of the Church is commonly due to the fact that he has plenty of time for all sorts of quite innocent, but also quite unimportant things. If we would understand the spiritual situation of the world today, we must understand this reverse of the picture. *The world resents any interference with its ambitions, any withdrawal of energy from its service.*

The Christian religion asserts that heaven is the true *center of interest* for human life, that that life is temporary and educative, and

that all that it contains should be subordinated to spiritual interests and aims.

This eager forward look is indispensable to true progress in spiritual experience.

But the world resents this. It insists that the Christian ideal of "other-worldliness" means the neglect of things that matter now and here. Neglects the proper development of human society. Neglects social problems. That it accepts the saying, "The poor ye have always with you" as though it were a divine decree; that it is, in fact, indifferent to social righteousness, to problems of health, poverty, and so forth.

The answer is, of course, quite obvious, that as a matter of fact Christians have not neglected these problems while they were dreaming of a future state of idle bliss; that Christians have been the leaders of reform; that it is the fundamental principles of the Gospel which guide the social action of even those who denounce the indifference of the Church and its concentration on heaven.

What, indeed, does the social reformer seek but a temporary and limited heaven, a Utopia, which if reached must perish? The Christian, believing in immortality and a

living God, at least conceives the Utopia he seeks as permanent.

There remains, however, this fundamental difference between Christianity and Humanism. Humanism means the cultivation of the values of this world. Its catch words are science, civilization, progress. It rejects the dwelling on any other values than the worldly ones. It denies the future—or at least ignores it.

Again, the Christian insists that he is not an anti-humanist, but a more complete humanist. Humanism, he insists, as it is commonly understood, does not deal with the whole man. It stresses intellectual and material values to the exclusion of spiritual values. But man is fundamentally a spiritual being, with an unending future. You are treating him unjustly if you ignore this in his education. His spiritual powers need training and development. He needs to be trained to face an unending future.

And this in no wise involves the neglect of this world. Rather it emphasizes its values, as it understands it as existing, not for itself and ending in inevitable extinction, but as a training ground. It sums this up in

S. Paul's saying: "And exercise thyself unto godliness: for bodily exercise is profitable for a little; but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come."

The proper attitude of the Christian is that which has been called "devout humanism." There is a sense in which a man can make the best of both worlds.

This world is the "Field of the Hidden Treasure," the place where goodly pearls can be bought. But they do not fall into one's lap. The adventurer and the merchant must seek and must understand his trade. In this world there are plenty of salted mines and artificial pearls offered to the unwary. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also." The advice is so wise as to seem commonplace. But have we followed it?

Just what treasure do you think that you have accumulated and put away for the

future? The assortment of the Judgment will accept certain values and reject others. The corruptible things will have to be purged and done away in the discipline of Purgatory. The gold, silver, and precious stones will survive, but the straw and stubble must be burned up.

Is it worthwhile accumulating hay, straw, and stubble? We all accumulate some, but need we try to accumulate it? Need we buy salted mines and artificial pearls?

The list of worthwhile things is sufficiently long to occupy a lifetime in their accumulation. Take one list, the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance.

The end of all discipline is to enter into the joy of the Lord, the Beatific Vision, the vision of Our Father who art in heaven.

Am I his loving and seeking child, consumed with desire for him?

Is my aspiration, "Even so come, Lord Jesus?"

*The Third Meditation*

## HALLOWED BE THY NAME

Let us listen to the words of Holy Scripture—

"Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."

Let us picture—

These heavenly hosts who have got the victory. "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having seven plagues, which are the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God. And I saw as it were a glassy sea mingled with fire; and them that come victorious from the beast, and from his image, and from the number of his name, standing by the glassy sea, having harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty;

righteous and true are thy ways, thou King of the ages. Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all the nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy righteous acts have been made manifest." The song of triumph floats out over the sea of glass clear as crystal. It is also a song of praise and of thanksgiving. They are filled with the sense of what God is, what his meaning is. In the day of their trial, in the bitterness of the struggle with the Beast and his followers, when oftentimes they were hard pressed and weary, no doubt they had felt their faith lose its strength and their hope grow dim. The odds against them seemed tremendous, the battle hopeless. They cried and there was no voice nor any that answered. Yet all the time, and in their hearts they knew it, heaven was not indifferent. The all-seeing eye was upon them, the divine sympathy was with them, the power of the Almighty was available, and in the crisis of the battle came to their aid. And now they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, and it is not only a song of victory but of recognition of the part God plays in their lives. And also of the part they play in

the plans of God. It is theirs to manifest God and the meaning of God in the struggle with all that withstands God, to make God, the name of God, the character of God, resplendent in the eyes of their fellows, to make sure that his name is hallowed. They have done that in their battle with the Beast, and now in this their hour of triumph gladly they sing, "Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints."

Consider, first—

That it is the Christian's duty to spread through the earth the knowledge of God. The Christian by his baptism is made one with God, he is the child of God, and therefore the world is entitled to see in him the character of God, God's meaning. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." The Son left on earth, as the result of his mission, the mystical Body he created to carry on the revelation of God that he had made and each individual Christian is called upon to participate in that work. "Behold what manner of love the

Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God: and such we are." The splendor of this vocation ought to be unmistakably visible in us. Men seeing our good works should glorify our Father which is in heaven. One mode of this manifestation of God's glory is by our victories over the Beast. Great is the power and influence of the Beast in this world: never greater than today when his disciples are earnest and zealous to spread his kingdom. It sometimes seems to one that the final battle is at hand. It seems, too, that in the face of the Beast the Church of God today is shrinking and trembling, is seeking peace through compromise rather than victory through struggle. The hosts of the Beast pour in through the open doors of the Church and even the members of the Church accept the life-standards of the Beast. S. John warns: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." But it is precisely the things of this world that are making an al-

most irresistible appeal to the members of Christ's Body today. The Beast lures with the innumerable fascinations of this world, the splendor of the myriad possible pleasures, and the children of the Kingdom rush through the wide gates on to the broad way. Our Lord, looking out upon this scene, murmurs again: "And shall not God avenge his elect, which cry to him day and night, and he is longsuffering over them? I say unto you, that he will avenge them speedily. How be it when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Shall he, indeed? It hardly looks so now. Yet there is the promise which heartens us: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Consider, second—

Where you are standing today? You are on the battle field: you can by no possible evasion avoid your responsibility. Your vocation is a vocation to witness. "Ye shall be witnesses unto me." To go into the world and preach the Gospel is not a commission to the formal ministry but to the Body, and to each member of the Body. There is a certain

taint of blasphemy in praying, "Hallowed be thy name," as the prayer falls from the lips of those who bear the mark of the Beast on their right hands and in their foreheads. There is no prayer that carries with it so much condemnation to the sayers of it as this Lord's Prayer, if it be said with unreality. Ask yourself, are you merely repeating a familiar form when you pray, Hallowed be thy Name, or are you acknowledging an obligation, accepting what is involved in your Christian vocation? Are you presenting the character of God to the world so that through your life the world can understand what God is? Are you conscious of your responsibility for your example? The world infers what you mean by God from your conduct. It scans that to ascertain what virtues are valued in your life. It is impossible to avoid this vocation. By divine election you have been chosen to be a witness, to testify to the meaning of God. Do you realize this vocation in all its overwhelming implications, that in the end it is your response to it that you will be called to answer for at the dreadful day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. Do not think of

judgment as turning on this or that sin, but rather on the vocation of a life fulfilled or neglected. It is a tremendous thing to be called to be a Christian—tremendous in its responsibilities, but also, thank God, tremendous in its privileges. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him."

Let us therefore pray—

For grace to see the meaning of our vocation and to fulfill it.

Lord Jesus Christ, who art the ineffable joy of Christians, of whose power and peace there is no end, make us to receive and possess thy Kingdom, that thou mayest ever rule within us. Take away from us whatever is not thine, and make us thine in all things, that nothing in us may oppose thy power, or resist thy peace, but thou alone mayest possess us, who livest and reignest, King of kings and Lord of lords, now and throughout all ages.

The object of revelation is to make God known. What is the meaning of the word *God?* What is God like? What is the relation of God to men? Christianity is the answer to these questions. God is our Father. God is light and life and love.

But such knowledge is superficial. It results in knowing *about* God, which is a step towards religion, but is not religion itself. Religion is not *knowing about,* but *knowing.* Knowing results from an intimate personal relationship. This is brought about by sacramental union,—regeneration into Christ and growing up in him—a vital union maintained by the constant action upon and within us of the Holy Spirit.

This in-facing toward God which results in knowing him and evermore knowing him deeper as the union grows in intensity, results also in an out-facing that knowledge may be imparted. This is our vocation as *witness.* "Ye shall be witnesses unto me." The Body is a corporate witness, and each member in his place and degree is commissioned to bear witness.

Our mission, then, is the continuation, the perpetuation, of our Lord's witness. We are

to answer the perpetual question of the world, What is the meaning of God? What is God like?

God's *Name* which we are to hallow is his personality—his character—that by which his nature and will is made known to us. This is a progressive revelation. "And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." "I am JEHOVAH: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH I was not known to them." "And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord, a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in

mercy and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin: and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation." "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

Christ manifests his reality. "I manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them to me; and they have kept thy word." The nature of Christ. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, And they shall call his name Immanuel." "And he is arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood: and his name is called The Word of God." "Wherefore also God highly ex-

alted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." "According to that working of the strength of his might, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." We in our turn manifest, in awe, reverence, worship.

Also the devotion to his purpose. "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." "And every one that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundred-fold, and shall inherit eternal life." "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is: and thou holdest fast my name, and didst not

deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth."

And the interpretation of his love. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This is the foundation of our social obligation.

Consider, then, our influence as interpreters. "Let as many as are servants under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and the doctrine be not blasphemed." "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ." "For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." "And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, By what power, or in what name, have ye done this? Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders, if we this day are examined concerning a good deed done to an impotent man, by what means this man is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in him doth this man stand here before you

whole." "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an ensample to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity." "For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps." "Brethren, be ye imitators together of me, and mark them which so walk even as ye have us for an ensample." "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, having made them an example unto those that should live ungodly." "And ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost; so that ye became an ensample to all that believe in Macedonia and in Achaia." "Tend the flock of God which is among you . . . neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock."

Personal salvation is incidental to our witness, a by-product in the fulfillment of our vocation, the result of our fulfillment of the purposes of the Body.

This is the answer to the asserted selfishness of Christians in looking for reward.

*The Fourth Meditation*

## THY KINGDOM COME

Let us listen to the words of Revelation—

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever."

Let us picture—

The kingdom of Christ in its ideal presentment. It is the reign of Christ over those whom he has redeemed. All things are now put under his feet, the battle is over, the victory won. We see the rejoicing multitude who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. They have entered into the peace of the Lord. They are now full citizens of the city, "the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God." The prophecy is fulfilled. "He hath swallowed up death for ever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears

from off all faces; and the reproach of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it." "And he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away." "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life; and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." All that disturbs and makes life restless and dissatisfied is left behind in this realm where there is no more sin. Try to see them. "After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; and they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb." How small a thing it now seems to them, that life of discipline and testing that they passed in this world. We picture them looking back on that life with mingled amusement and pity. How could they so have mis-

estimated life, misjudged its value, clung to things of no importance, fretted and rebelled and doubted, when all the time this future was spread before their eyes, as the end to which they were invited, as the reward of victorious struggle. But it is all past now and they have not missed the way. They have entered into the joy of the Lord.

Consider, first—

That the purpose of life here is the building of the city and the education of its future citizens. All the materials for our education are given us. We are baptized into the Body which is the totality of the citizenry. We are offered the grace of the sacraments to strengthen us for the spiritual combat. We are presented with the meaning of this spiritual life in the Book of God's revelation, interpreted for us in the experience of God's saints who have gone before us on the Pilgrim Way. It is all so very clear and straightforward—and we are so stupid. We can very well apply to ourselves our Lord's words: "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" "O faithless and perverse genera-

tion, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you?"

Consider that in the light of Christ's life and of God's revelation this life of ours is very clear in its meaning. There is nothing that is essential to its understanding that has been hid from us. God sends his Son into the world to redeem the world. The Son comes proclaiming the meaning of his mission as the establishment of his Kingdom. His disciples are commissioned to carry on his work. The revelation that is given of the meaning of that work makes clear its character—it reaches out beyond this world and finds its consummation when death is swallowed up in victory and all things are put under Christ's feet. Then, "He put all things in subjection under his feet." Could anything be clearer than the revealed mind and purpose of God? How can men talk of the "mystery of life," its "cruel enigmas," when God has made it all so plain! Even before Christ the Psalmist could say:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul:

He guideth me in the paths of righteousness
for his Name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of
the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; for thou art with me:
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the
presence of mine enemies:
Thou hast anointed my head with oil; my
cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life:
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord
for ever."

Consider, second—

How can you have any doubt of your vocation? You were called with an holy calling: you are the elect of God. Election means election to privilege—it means being chosen to citizenship in the Kingdom of God. And why were you chosen? To save your own soul? Not at all: your soul was saved when you were called, if you abide by the condition of your calling. Learn to think of something beside yourself. Get rid of the attitude of the spiritual child who thinks gifts are

because of his merits, are his due. You are chosen for a work of God and are given gifts and graces and opportunities that you may fulfil that work. Your mission is to coöperate in the upbuilding of the Kingdom of Heaven. Get rid of all atheistic drivel about the "mystery of life," the meaning of creation, the mystery of pain and temptation. Yours is not to reason why, or to insist upon knowing why God made a world and this particular sort of world, but to get on with the work. Shake off doubt and sloth. "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." We are not traveling an unknown road to an unknown end. Meditate what S. Peter says: "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: and this voice we ourselves heard come out of heaven, when we were with him

in the holy mount. And we have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost."

Examine yourself. You have been saying this prayer all your life—"Thy Kingdom come." Have you meant anything by it? Have you done anything about it? Have you dedicated your life to the work? Or are you just a miserable half-believer, professing but not doing; saying Lord, Lord, and then going your way? Be assured that if you are not fulfilling your vocation as a builder now, there is no ground for supposing that you will dwell in the City hereafter.

Let us then pray—

For clearness of understanding and strength of purpose.

O God, the Father Almighty, who hast raised up thy Son to be our King,

grant us to have in thee the light of knowledge and the fullness of all virtues; that while we seek the gifts of knowledge, we may come again to thee, who art the Fount of knowledge; through thy mercy, O our God, who livest and dost reign and govern all things.

The Kingdom of God is, formally, the totality of those who have been baptized into Christ and made one with him, thus constituting a spiritual organism. This organism has been functioning in the world since the first day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles and completed their spiritual regeneration.

They, from that time, began to fulfil their vocation and preach the Gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Pentecostal sermon of Saint Peter was the beginning of the Church mission work. "At that time there were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." The history of the Church henceforth is one of ceaseless propaganda.

Not without its difficulties. Our Lord had made clear the nature of the difficulties they would meet. "If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you." "Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

He also made it clear that the greatest difficulties in the way of the upbuilding of the Kingdom would come from within. Although the vocation of Christians is to sanctify, having been made members of Christ, yet they are possessed with the awful gift of free-will. It is easy for them to fall away from their vocation.

In his parables he made clear the necessarily mixed character of the Church. We are brought into the Church immature in order to be subjected to the educative influences which are a part of the Kingdom's endowment. But we respond to those influences *as we will*. That the result would be an imperfect accomplishment was expected. There would be also tares among the wheat. Our

Lord summed up the truth when he said: "Many are called but few are chosen."

Consequently, the history of the Kingdom, or Church, presents many discouraging features. The sins of its members are many and various. Not only the personal sins of individual Christians, but the sins of the Church acting as a whole, as a ruling body. The outstanding fact is the conformity of the Church to the world, the assimilation of worldly methods, the resort to force to gain ends. The early adoption of persecution as a method of maintaining unity is absolutely at variance with our Lord's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. The condonation of war, the building up of an elaborate system which can only exist by virtue of money, so that the cry of the Church through the centuries has been for ever more money. Thus it comes into constant contest with the secular power and arouses antagonism and cupidity. When the Church by its organization became of this world, it lost of necessity much of its spiritual character and power.

We have to ask ourselves why the Church which began, and for a while continued in the

face of persecution and hatred, a great and successful missionary movement slowed down and for the last five hundred years has made relatively no progress. Why today it contains less than one-third of the population of the world, estimating simply by formal membership, and much less estimating by actual devout Christians. Can there be any other answer than that it has abandoned the ideals set by our Lord? That it today all over the world is a worldly organization of worldly people, attempting to conquer the world by worldly methods. The tares have smothered the growth of the wheat.

We talk of "Christian society," but where is it? Is it not true that a person living by the Gospel can find no place in modern society, no social group to associate with? Is it not true that a person living by the Gospel and faithfully teaching it could find no place in which to teach? Is it not true that the qualities required in bishops and clergy are not those required by the Gospel? Is it not almost a blasphemy to say "Thy Kingdom come" under such conditions of life?

But we keep on praying day by day, "Thy

Kingdom come," when obviously we do not want it to come.

If we are in earnest in desiring the coming of the Kingdom, we will look first at our own lives. Because if the Kingdom is to come it will be as the result of our effort. God is not going to impose the Kingdom, otherwise it would have come long ago. God simply offers man the means of transforming the kingdoms of this world into the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom will come in its fullness when we want it to come.

The personal question is, Do I want the Kingdom to come? What am I doing to make it come? What I am first of all bound to do is not to convert someone else but to convert myself. Am I an expression of the Kingdom? Am I living a life which is a living interpretation of the Gospel of Christ? Obviously I am not, or I would not get on so well with the world. The disciples of our Lord who set out to interpret him to the world speedily got into trouble with the world. We do not. That was because they were living in a heathen society? So are we. There is no Christian society today. Numbers of those in the early

Church who wanted to live a Christian life found that they could not do it in Rome or Alexandria, and consequently went out into the deserts to live. Is it not true that if you want to live the Christian life you must detach yourself from the social life of New York or wherever it is that you live? And isn't it true that *you don't want to do that?*

Yet it can be done. But we must want Christ more than anything else, must be ready to leave all in order to follow him.

But that, you say, is just individualism, and individualism is the negation of the Christian ideal. We are members of the Body, and of one another. What about that?

*The Church must be converted.* One individual living a Christian life will be considered a freak. But many individuals living Christian lives will control the organization which is the visible expression of the organism. We cannot convert the organization by acquiescence but by opposition. If enough opposition can be aroused, if enough spiritual life can be kindled, then the organism can express itself through the organization and not, as at present, be suppressed by it.

Individualism is bad if it seeks individual

ends and is satisfied with them. That was the defect of the hermit life. The Religious Life is tolerable only if it is fruitful—if it stimulates and energizes outside itself. Therefore is the individual Christian, if he has attained his ends, a missionary. He is seeking to advance the Kingdom. He is seeking to influence other lives.

Once more, then, the personal question: In what sense am I a Christian? What am I doing to further the Kingdom?

It comes to this, does it not? What is my first interest? I look about me and see men and women and their interests—business, liberty, a good time.

Spiritual values? No. What do I mean by spiritual values? Primarily, the Sermon on the Mount. That is the charter of the Kingdom.

Go over the Beatitudes. Do they mean anything practical to you? Have you the Spirit of poverty, of meekness, and so on?

How can the Kingdom come unless you want it to come?

*The Fifth Meditation*

## THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

Let us listen to the words of the Gospel—

"Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."

Let us picture—

Our Lord going out from the Upper Room after the institution of the Supper. That was the culmination of one phase of his work. He had trained the little group he had chosen, and had now consummated their union with himself as he joined them to him in the first Eucharist. Now he goes out from this atmosphere of spiritual intensity to meet the end—the consummation of the sacrificial life. He is facing the supreme trial of his human nature, and he must face it alone. First all the Apostles save three are left, then these chosen

three are left. He goes out alone to prepare for the sacrifice, the hour of which draws near. He still has a certain human longing (it is what brings him very near to us) for sympathy; but the three do not understand—how could they? And they fall asleep under the trees of the garden. Try to see Jesus alone, kneeling, facing the coming hour. It is not fear of pain that causes him to shrink and cry out. It is that the burden of the world's sin is laid upon him. He who knows no sin must be made sin for us. Is there no escape from this? Is not a pure life of devoted service enough? So it flashes across his mind. Yes, there is an escape. He has already pointed it out. "Or thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?" But this involves the abandonment of his mission. He cannot do that. He cries in agony, but he accepts. "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." This he will presently repeat. "Jesus therefore said unto Peter, Put up the sword into the sheath: the cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

Consider, first—

That humanity offering itself to God is summed up in Jesus Christ. The purpose of the Incarnation was not to create a unique individual who should for ever stand out alone, in isolation from us, as a splendid example whom we viewed from afar with admiration, but could never hope to touch. The object of the Incarnation is *union*. Christ Jesus took our nature that we might take his nature. The Incarnation is an open way of approach. "Now this he said not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation; and not for the nation only, but that he might also gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad." "And I am no more in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are. . . . I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me." "For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the

one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many. And not as through one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment came of one unto condemnation, but the free gift came of many trespasses unto justification. For if, by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, even Jesus Christ. So then as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous. And the law came in beside, that the trespass might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly: that, as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews

or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; it is not therefore not of the body. And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; it is not therefore not of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now they are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary: and those parts of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness; whereas our comely parts have no need: but God tempered the body together, giving more abundant honour to that part which lacked; that there should be no schism in the body; but that the

members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, divers kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all gifts of healings? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But desire earnestly the greater gifts. And a still more excellent way shew I unto you." "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female: for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus." "According to his good pleasure which he purposed in him unto a dispensation of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things, in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth."

Consider that all thoughts of Christ—be they of Teacher, Example, or what not—that fall short of the Sacrificial Victim offered for the sins of the world leave the Incarnation

meaningless and useless. They leave us with a Christ essentially like ourselves, and therefore impotent to save. If Jesus was but a teacher, there was no need of his sacrifice and we can only consider it an accident growing out of contemporary conditions. But if he is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, sacrifice is inherent in his mission to a sinful world. For what he has to deliver the world from is not ignorance but sin. He shows them what they truly are—sinners. He shows them a God who loves sinners and wishes to save them. He shows them the way to attain salvation, by the conversion of their will. Not only must God will to save man and Christ will to die for them, but man himself must will to accept the offer of God made in Christ and will to be saved in the only way he can be saved.

Consider, second—

Whether you have surrendered your will to God's will. Has the appeal of Christ's sacrifice reached and touched you? "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Look back now over your life. What has ruled it? The will of God? Has that been cen-

tral in your life, to know and follow that will? Or is your life a record of self-will? You have been constantly praying: "Thy will be done." Have you meant that? A certain man, being asked what had changed his life, answered, "I stopped lying to God." Have you been lying to God, saying unreal prayers, prayers you did not want to come true? Or did you just want other people to do God's will?

Consider what it meant to Christ to do God's will—a life of self-discipline and sacrifice. He could have led a "good life" without that. But would it really have been a good life? Is any life good in the complete sense which does not seek and accept God's will? We mean by a good life one that conforms to contemporary standards of the social group to which we belong. But that is only a *respectable life*. Our Lord has something to say about a respectable life. "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them: else ye have no reward with your Father which is in heaven. When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have

glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee." The world likes conformity. Christianity demands differences. "Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." "If therefore thy whole body be full of light, having no part dark, it shall be wholly full of light, as when the lamp with its bright shining doth give thee light." To be different means sacrifice. Are you willing to sacrifice? It is the eternal call of Christ—"If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross daily and follow me." Does your life bear the sign of the cross? "All our crosses are shaped by the Carpenter of Nazareth."

Let us, then, pray—

That our wills may be completely surrendered to the will of Christ. Let us pray that

we may be ready to accept that will as sacrifice.

> O God, who leadest us through things temporal to things eternal, stretch forth thy mercy to those who strive after thy heavenly promises, and as it is thy gift that we believe in thee, so may all thy life be thine; through our Lord, Jesus Christ.

God's will is done perfectly in heaven. We are not to think of that will as being an imposed law which is enforced by authority. Heaven is not a tyranny. Rather it approaches a socialism. Those who are in heaven are there because they have made God's will their own—have assimilated it. Those of them who have passed there from human experience have done so as the result, not of submission to the divine will, but by finding in union with that will and by expressing that will in their lives, their own perfect development. "In his will is our peace."

In this world, which is God's creation and the field of his incarnate activity, we have only to look about us to understand that *will*

is not *force*. Here men are permitted to choose and multitudes in their choice reject the will of God. "He came unto his own and his own received him not." Only to such as voluntarily receive him does he give "power to become the sons of God." He who submits to force is a slave, and although the New Testament writers delight in calling themselves "the slaves of God," it is because they have made his will and his service the end of their life and the fullness of their joy. To choose God because he is the highest and best is to attain perfect freedom, the liberty of the children of God.

It is only those who have not found in the doing of God's will a perfecting of their lives, who have not seen in that their ideal, who find the will of God and obedience to him an oppressive force. They are attracted by some other ideal than that which Christ offers them. Freedom of thought, personal liberty, represent in men's minds today a revolt from the ideals of the Gospel.

If it is true that we are immortal beings with an endless future before us, the nature of which we shape by our conduct here and now, then the true liberty is the liberty to

seek and attain the fullness of life, of that eternal life which is the gift of Christ and is found in union with him. It is not liberty to do as we will, but true liberty is freedom from those things which hinder us from attaining our ideal development. Freedom to the disciple struggling to reach an ideal means freedom from sin. "Know ye not, that to whom ye present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness." From this state of bondage we are delivered. "Ye were bought with a price; become not bondservants of men."

But do we know God's will? Undoubtedly. By revelation. We have a general statement of it. "Your sanctification." The primary aim of the Christian life, therefore, is the aim to attain sanctification. Sanctification means union with Christ: a state of grace. That is the broad statement.

There in our Lord's teaching we have

sketched the type of life which "sanctification" means. And we have this developed in the teaching of the saints.

And this life is not given to us as a series of moral maxims. It is incarnated, first in Christ who lives his teaching; then in the saints who in all generations have verified the teaching in experience. If they have at times found the experience of following Christ difficult, they have realized that they were, like him, cross-bearers. But in the main, *because* they were pursuing the Way of Love, they have found the truth of his saying, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." His commandments are not grievous; and if at times under the pressure of the cross they have asked for relief, they have received the answer, "My grace is sufficient for you." And they have been able to echo Gethsemane: "Not my will, but thine, be done."

The education of the Christian is essentially a training to conformity to God's will. There is a certain outward conformity which is not without value because it involves a recognition of the ideal. But if it does not proceed beyond that it degenerates into for-

malism and is in danger of becoming hypocrisy. The chief danger is that it is not a seeking of God's will at all, but a reflection from a social standard. It seeks constantly to reduce Christian life to the lowest possible terms. It seeks the minimum and not the maximum—what must I do, and not, what can I do?

Those who are really seeking to push on to perfection never ask, Must I? *Ought* is a word that belongs to an immature spiritual experience. The sense of obligation implies an imperfect outlook. The Christian seeks opportunity. He aspires. He "presses on to the prize of his high calling." What he desires is inner conformity to the will of God. That eager desire to express it which springs from love—"my beloved is mine and I am his."

That the Christian serves because of reward is in a sense true. But the reward is God —union with God. When we have attained the consciousness of God's children, then our Christian life is devoted to the ends of the Father. We are animated by a true patriotism, devotion to the Kingdom of God. We see the whole world lying in the power of the

wicked one, and we want to do our part in its deliverance. To rescue God's erring children from the power of darkness, to give our lives to the Kingdom. So we are identified with the Kingdom and shall share in its triumphs. We are selfish in the sense that any true patriot is selfish—we desire to participate in the fruits of victory, to sit down at the supper. "And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are true words of God. . . . And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid heaven, Come and be gathered together unto the great supper of God."

Obedience is the way of knowledge. It is so everywhere. The modern person wishes to "think for himself"; thought ought to be free. There is no doubt a certain right of private judgment, but most often the exercise of the right turns out to be the "right of private stupidity." To think for ourselves—yes. But that means, in any department of life, to think under guidance. No one thinks of beginning mathematics, or physics, or music, as though they were things quite un-

known. Everyone expects to start from previously acquired knowledge. One starts from the textbook, the teacher.

One does expect to go on, to make discoveries, if one has any ambition. Perhaps there are new discoveries to be made in the spiritual life—who knows? But one may be sure that they will be made on the basis of already acquired experience. And for most of us, living our own lives and thinking things out for ourselves, will mean the translation of theory into experience. Every life is a new life, a new spiritual problem. What it has to do is to verify spiritual theory under individual circumstances.

Thus spiritual life is a recapitulation of the life of Christ, not strictly an imitation of it, but its repetition. This repetition of experience will take an individual shape. Hence the endless variety of the lives of the saints. It is not sanctity, but sin, that is monotonous.

We succeed in this spiritual transformation by seeking and following the will of God. We do not know in order to do, but we do in order to know. "He that doeth the will shall know of the doctrine." The more we advance in the spiritual life the more we grow in

spiritual intelligence. Sun blinds, stupefies. The deeper a man sinks in sin, the less of spiritual understanding he has. And the sin may be simply a sin of neglect, of turning one's back on the truth of God. How many assume that Christianity is untrue, and therefore find no light! There is nothing more striking or disheartening than the ignorance of the intelligent.

In an unconverted society, God's will means Christ's cross. It means witness, for which the other word is martyrdom—not now death, but isolation, misunderstanding, contempt.

Are you facing this? Are you in earnest when you pray, "Thy will be done"?

*The Sixth Meditation*

## GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

Let us listen to the words of the Gospel—

"They say unto him, We have five loaves and two fishes. He said, Bring them hither to me."

Let us picture—

This scene of the open country by the lake of Geneseret. It is at the height of our Lord's popularity. The fame of him has spread through the country—the fame of a new prophet who performs wonderful miracles of healing. Multitudes follow him and crowd about him so that he has no time so much as to eat. There is no refuge for him even in these uninhabited lands. Impelled by the need of healing, impelled by curiosity, they follow after him. It is no deep spiritual motive in the majority of them: presently he will say of them: "Ye seek me, not because ye saw signs,

but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled." But their very ignorance, their helplessness, their vague aspiration, appeals to him. He sees them as sheep having no shepherd, wandering through life leaderless, without guidance, held in contempt by the very men who should have shepherded them. "These people who know not the Law are accursed," an inferior people in the eyes of the snobbish leaders in Jerusalem. "Can any good thing come out of Galilee?"

Here are the crowds, five thousand of them, without food and far from any possibility of food. So he has compassion on the multitude. He turns to his own followers—"Give ye them to eat." Naturally, they are helpless—they, too, have no food. "There is a lad here that hath five barley loaves and two small fishes: but what are these among so many?" How helpless it sounds. But it is Jesus' opportunity. "Make them sit down." We see the look of wondering expectancy in the faces of the Apostles. They knew his ways so well by now that they waited knowing there would be some action—but what action? The lad stands by, having given up his meager store. And Jesus "took the five loaves, and two

fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed and brake and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude." See the bread multiplying in his hands. See the disciples distributing it, and the people, fed, returning to their homes. The five thousand had seen nothing. They had eaten and been filled, but *how* they know not.

Consider, first—

That this incident is a picture of God's constant dealing with his children. We are like that multitude. We wander aimlessly through life, impelled by passion, impulse, curiosity, needs that we feel but take no pains to understand. And the Providence of God watches over us and provides for us, and we take what God gives and think not at all of the giver. We assume that we have a right to all the fulness of life, that we owe no thankfulness, no allegiance, no service. We take our privileges and repudiate our obligations, or, most likely, are unconscious of them. We do not see life other than selfishly, without obligation or testing opportunities. If challenged, we shall no doubt say: "When saw we thee anhungered, or naked, or in prison?"

And is it not still true today of the mass of men that they are as sheep having no shepherd? Can it not still be said after many centuries, "For they that lead this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed?" Can we hear our Lord's words—"Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor," without thinking of the present application? "Having eyes they see not." The worst are the wilfully blind. "Those of the Pharisees which were with him heard these things, and said unto him, Are we also blind? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye would have no sin: but now ye say, We see: your sin remaineth." These are the "intellectuals," the educated leaders, those whose books of popular guidance pour from the press, whose voices sound over the radio. Leaders of the Church are not wanting among them. We need to cry to God today, "O Lord, have compassion on the multitude; O Lord, shepherd thy sheep!" But God has constantly done his part. We have Moses and the Prophets. "Therefore, behold, I send unto

you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: some of them shall ye kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city."

Consider, second—

How great is the responsibility of those who know; and not only of those who know but of those who have opportunity to know. We are responsible for the use of God's gifts. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also. The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Our

Lord's words to the Churches in the Book of Revelation show how great is our responsibility and how high is the standard of our judgment. "I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them which call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false." Those whose vocation it is to lead, to instruct, need to take to heart this aspect of their mission, lest the criticism of them be: "And these are shepherds that cannot understand: they have all turned to their own way, each one to his gain, from every quarter." "My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting place."

Consider how richly we have been provided with all things needful for our spiritual life and growth. That burst of exultation of Saint Paul—"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our

Lord." Consider the watchfulness of God. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father." Look back at your own life. We are prone to dwell upon those aspects of life which involve hardness and suffering and loss. But how small a part these are in the average life. And when they are present, are they not most often, probably always, if we would understand them, offers of God, truly means of grace? The point we are to meditate as to our lives is what insight, what spiritual understanding, are we showing? Are we thinking of life as a constant stream of God-given opportunities? On our selection and use depends our fulfillment of our vocation. Someone has said: "I do not wonder at the things men suffer, I wonder at the things they miss." So our Lord wondered. "And Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you?" "And he said unto them, O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" There is no lack of provision on God's part. Each day brings its daily bread. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul:
He guideth me in the paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; for thou art with me:
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the pres-
ence of mine enemies:
Thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup
runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life:
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for
ever."

It is ours to choose whether we will dwell in the House of the Lord for ever.

Let us, then, pray—

For the guidance of the Holy Spirit in making our choice in life. Let us pray to understand the Bread that God offers.

Almighty and Everlasting God, whom, taught by thy Holy Spirit, we

dare to call upon as Father, create in us the hearts of faithful children, that by service due we may be enabled to enter on our promised heritage; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end.

I think we may understand this petition of the Lord's Prayer as a prayer for the continuance to us of his providential care. Or perhaps it were better to say that it is an act of self-committal to that care. Our Father, we have said; and this is the act of a child who surrenders himself to the Father's love. It is like that prayer we repeat before falling asleep—"Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit."

It is the putting away of anxiety, as our Lord taught us. "Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself." Anxious thought weighs upon us and saddens us. The possibility of it is what separates us from the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. We cannot live day by day. We peer into the future; we plan and

provide, we shape life with reference to conceived ends.

All that is inevitable and right. We are on probation. We are facing the Judgment. We are bidden to watch and pray for we know not the hour when the Master will come. If the servant had known he would have watched and been ready.

But all this is to be done without anxiety, without worry. In thoughtfulness—yes; striving to see and to know and to follow the Father's will as we have prayed that we may. But in complete submission and reliance upon that will. We need the conviction of the Psalmist: "Except the Lord build the house, They labor in vain that build it: Except the Lord keep the city, The watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you that ye rise up early, and so late take rest, And eat the bread of toil: For so he giveth unto his beloved sleep."

What the Christian is sure of—and this is what sets him apart from others and gives his life its distinctive character—is that life is neither just the resultant of mechanical force, that we are will-less automata; nor that we are beings without responsibility, living

our own lives as we will; but that each one of us has a purpose, a vocation, a place in God's thought, which we are to find and to carry out. Broadly, we know what our vocation is: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." "Be ye therefore holy." "Ye are called to be saints." Saint Paul elaborates this—"I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. . . . And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ; till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

To find one's niche and one's work, that is the problem with which we are faced. "So then, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own

salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure." Most Christians, I suppose, ignore this fact of vocation. They think of vocation as applying to the clergy, to Religious. But the humblest Christian is offered a place to serve in the Kingdom of God. He may, of course, ignore it; he may reject and repudiate it; but the Providence of God *wanted something* from him and gave him the opportunity of contributing that *something* to the up-building of the Kingdom. It may have seemed but a little thing, not worth doing, but there are no little things in the eyes of God. There is no work for God that we can reject with contempt. "It is better to be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the tents of the ungodly."

It is when we have sought to accept God's will and consecrate ourselves to it that we can safely expect his response—the daily bread, the grace that enables us. Then we can think of ourselves as "workers together with him," enabled by his grace to run and not to run in vain.

What more definitely is the "bread" that we daily need? Is it not comprehended in the

gift of God's Spirit—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and godliness, the Spirit of holy fear.

How manifold and rich are these gifts! We heard of them when we were confirmed—but have we heard much of them since? Must one insist again that God's gifts are not automatic for us; but power that may be utilised or not. One is made the child of God in one's baptism, but one may quite easily live as the child of the devil. One has the wonderful gifts of the Holy Spirit bestowed in Confirmation, but one may pass the rest of one's life with no attempt to use them. God spreads a table in our sight, but we may decline his invitation and go our way to our field and our oxen.

But our Lord's prayer should remind us of these things. We are praying that God will continue to offer—but why should he if we continue to reject? Does not the prayer become a blasphemy if we only ask what in reality we shall by our conduct show we do not want?

To ask God's care is not to ask that he will excuse our carelessness. It may be asking that

he will give us opportunity to retrieve the past so far as it can be retrieved.

Look back over life and see how the providence of God has been shown in it. In the first place is the fact that you were called to be a Christian. Most of the human race are not so called. *You were.* You were elected according to grace.

In order to make the election effective, you have been made partakers in the sacraments, Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist.

You have been offered work in God's Kingdom. Are you quite sure that you have not thrust aside any of these offers? Declined any vocation? Think over the humble routine of Christian service, the life in a parish, the work of the Sunday School and the guilds. You could not teach? Why? Because you neglected to prepare yourself. You do not know what you ought to know of God and of God's will. Think of the opportunities of testifying to the faith which is in you in your social life, opportunities which you are unable to meet because of your willful ignorance. You have to sit silent while the Church is attacked, the faith denied.

If you are a priest, have you taught, fully and without reserve, the faith and practice of the Catholic Church? I recall an incident in my own experience. A man came to me and made his first confession. I went to see his wife and spoke to her about confession. She answered indignantly, "If I ought to have made my confession, why wasn't I taught that by my priest when I was confirmed?" Why, indeed? If you are a layman, have you been careful to present a consistent life?

As to your own interior life, how have you used God's bread for that—prayer, meditation? Recall our Lord's Beatitudes. "Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." And "work not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you."

We are safe in including in our prayer the thought of the Holy Communion, the Bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Our prayer is "Lord, evermore give us this bread."

But what about our coöperation with Christ in the Eucharist? He offers himself. What

about our part—our preparation, our intention, our thanksgiving?

Looking at our sacramental experience, what can we see as its result? Has it resulted in a life of constant union with our Lord?

*The Seventh Meditation*

## AND FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TREPASS AGAINST US

Let us listen to the words of our Lord—

"That thou mayest know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

Let us picture—

This man let down through the roof, lying on a cot at Jesus' feet. Jesus' popularity is great; the crowd blocks the way of those who have come to him to be healed. The house, too, is full of those who listen to Jesus' words. It is strange doctrine that he teaches; he speaks as one having authority. As always, its strangeness attracts some and repels others. Perhaps it is only a few who are caught by the meaning of what he says. Then there comes this strange interruption; the roof is opened and the cot is let down on which a

man is lying. Try to see Jesus looking at the man lying there. See the man looking hopefully at Jesus. He has heard so much of him, of the many he has cured. Surely he will not fail him, lying so helpless, so pitiful, before him. See the friends who have brought him and would be put off by no obstacle, looking down through the open roof. Then hear the unexpected words: "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Can we not see the startled look on the man's face? Jesus knows, then—knows what has brought him to this state. It is sin, sin that he is sorry for, sin that he thinks no one knows. But this unexpected healing of the soul, how it overwhelms him. It startles others, too. See those scribes there, saying among themselves, "Who is this man who undertakes to forgive sin, this blasphemer? Only God can forgive sin." Jesus reads their thoughts and says: "Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is easier, to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy) I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy

house." See the crowd making way as the man silently lifts his bed and goes out.

Consider, first—

The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins. That he might do this was the object of his mission: he came to seek and to save those who are lost. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. I say it was the object of his mission; it would perhaps be better to say that forgiveness of sin is the necessary preliminary to his dealing with the individual soul. Forgiveness is not the end, but the beginning—the clearing of the way. We can make no progress, show no growth, if we are content to remain in a state of sin. Sin paralyzes God's work for the individual soul. Sin—social sin—prevents the coming of the Kingdom of God. Sin must be got rid of before we can arise and walk. This man thought he wanted healing; but he really wanted cleansing. How many there are like him, who, vaguely conscious of their sin, yet think that it can be overlooked, set aside, disregarded, and that they can go on in a religious growth, can somehow go around the obstacle. Perhaps they are ignorant, unin-

structed souls who have never been taught the means of forgiveness, whose imperfect repentance God may take pity upon. Perhaps they are prejudiced souls, who say to themselves, "How can this man forgive sin?" One wonders what the scribes thought when this man arose and took up his bed and went out of the house. Were they convinced of Jesus' mission, of his power? Or were they just (as is so human) made more hostile by our Lord's words and the act that they could not explain? We have so many instances of that. Jesus' miracles only provoked more bitter hostility from his critics. But we may be sure that the crowd was filled with joy and wonder and acclaimed Jesus. They had no prejudices, but had they an enduring faith?

Consider, second—

The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins. But he cannot forgive without our coöperation. We can at any moment prevent the work that Christ died to do for us, can shut the door in his face when he comes to us, refuse to open when he knocks. We do this by persistence in sin, especially in habitual sin that we make no true effort to overcome.

The evidence of repentance is reformation: unless there is a sincere effort at reformation, our repentance is obviously unreal. We may approach our Lord at any time—the door of the confessional is always open; but absolution is effective only if repentance is real. There is small use in repeating day after day this prayer for forgiveness unless we want forgiveness enough to forsake sin. Under the influence of modern trends of thought we treat sin much too lightly.

Therefore we need to go back to our self-examination and ask, first, not what sins have I committed since my last confession, but is there any evidence in my life that I want to forsake sin? Am I more watchful, more careful, less liable to acquiesce in the low standards of living I see about me? Am I really guiding myself by Christ's mind, or by the mind of the people with whom I associate? We need from time to time a general self-examination whether we make a general confession or not. Self-examination does not of *necessity* imply confession: self-examination is for understanding. And one is often impressed with the superficiality of one's self-knowledge. It is vital to know one's character,

one's weakness, to face oneself and not to seek excuses for oneself. Recall the disaster of voluntary ignorance: "When saw we thee naked or hungry or in prison and did not minister unto thee?"

Let us, then, pray—

For greater insight into our life. Pray to see yourself through God's eyes. What we are in the sight of God, that we really are.

> O God, who by thy co-eternal Wisdom didst fashion man when he was not, and didst mercifully refashion him when fallen, grant, we beseech thee, that by the inspiration of the same Wisdom we may love thee with all our mind, and run after thee with all our strength, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

This clause of the Lord's Prayer contains a warning. We beg for forgiveness continually. "As we forgive those who trespass against us." I would emphasize this as I have known so many people who never realize that the prayer was often defeated in its object by the

obstacles they themselves opposed to its fulfillment. As our Lord amplifies this condition it is strange that any should miss it. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

God is always ready to forgive. We are often grudging in our forgiveness. We hold to a sense of injury. "We can forgive, but we can't forget," we say. What a small, spiritually stunted soul that implies! "Can't forget" means a morbid dwelling on past injury, real or imagined, a constant reconstruction of the past in imagination.

Our forgiveness does not depend on the mental attitude of the one who has injured us. Outward reconciliation depends on that, but forgiveness is our own inner state, which makes us ready at any moment to be reconciled. The enemy has ceased to be an enemy. He has not even passed into the neutral state. He has become the object of love. Our Lord reverses what had been the traditional morality. "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy : but I say unto you, Love your enemies,

and pray for them that persecute you." And when the question was raised as to the limit of forgiveness: "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? unto seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven."

We need to make clear to ourselves that there is nothing arbitrary in the attitude of God. There are things that God cannot do. He cannot automatically change our spiritual state. He can only coöperate with us in making the change. It is well that we think this out in its application to the sacrament of Penance.

God only can forgive sin. But God appoints someone to act as his representative in conferring pardon. The priest in the confessional sits as judge—but he is not an infallible judge. He cannot read the heart. He acts on the case as submitted. Whether the absolution he gives is in fact effective depends on the truth, the sincerity, the purpose, in short, on the spiritual state of the person who kneels before him. The priest is entitled to assume, does in fact assume, unless there is grave cause for doubt, that this person would not be kneeling before him if he were not sincerely peni-

tent. But there is always the possibility that the absolution will not be effective.

This is the element in the problem that the penitent ought to know. He ought to know whether he is capable of being forgiven. He knows whether he is concealing mortal sin. He knows whether he has fulfilled the condition upon which previous absolution was granted. He knows (to get back to our subject) whether in fact he has forgiven those who he thinks have injured him. He knows whether he bears deadly hatred in his heart. One dreads to think of the numbers of useless absolutions which are given during a war.

Forgiveness is, of course, the primary need of the sinner; but we cannot stop there. *Forgiveness is for a purpose.* It reinstates one in one's status as a citizen of the Kingdom of God. It is the administration of a spiritual tonic to enable us to fulfil the obligations of that status.

There has been an unfortunate phase of Christian thought which has ignored or even denied the obligation of the Christian to *act.* This had had two forms of expression: 1. Quietism, which would have us merely receptive—"Wait on the Lord"; 2. Justification

by faith only, which would have us simply hold fast the promise of God, and in case of any lapse in conduct to return to faith.

Both these depreciate the value of good works. Neither of them is theoretically active today, but the attitude of spiritual passivity which they express is active. It expresses itself commonly in a debilitating individualism. The Anglo-Catholic who says, "I go to Mass every Sunday and make my confession regularly—what more is there?"

There is a great deal more. There is the whole programme of the Christian life. We have not graduated: we have only prepared. The typical Pharisee of today is the "Catholic" who is quite sure that he is much better than anyone else. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.

To be forgiven is to pass from sickness to health, and should be followed by the régime of a healthy soul. All the activities of the Kingdom of God are now possible. And they are of obligation. The Kingdom of God is no place for the slothful soul. The sort of Christian life which carefully preserves the one talent committed to it did not appeal to

our Lord. It was the active soul that was greeted with, "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

To enter into the joy of the Lord is the privilege of the forgiven soul even now, for there is no joy like that of work accomplished in union with the Lord. The work may be as difficult as you please, but if it is God's work and we are consciously giving ourselves to it in union with him, it is the abundance of joy. Joy is not the same thing as pleasure—that may or may not come. But joy is the satisfaction of a fulfilled mission, of a life given if needful, of a cross borne. It really is not necessary to pity cross-bearers; they are the most joyful souls in the Kingdom. One is only amused at the children of the world who are filled with pity for the faithful children of the Kingdom, who, for example, think of the Religious Life as being so hard and bleak and joyless. One finds it difficult to understand the "joie de vivre" as other than a narcotic taken to kill the sense of futility which would beset the life of the world if one took time

to think of its meaning, or allowed one's thought to dwell upon it. One smiles at the alleged "narrowness of the Religious Life." Joubert said, "Nothing shrivels a man up so much as trivial pleasures."

The joys of the forgiven soul are manifold in their detail, but they all grow out of the consciousness of our union in will and purpose with our Lord. Service flows out from that, and is a delight. But the experience itself of being at one with Christ is the supreme thing. To know that one is "in Christ"; that all things that are Christ's are ours; that we are day by day growing up into him who is the Head; to be able to follow him from time to time into the "desert place" and to be alone with him; to escape from the world to see "Jesus only"—that is the supreme joy.

But here and now it can only be passing. Life cannot be lived on the Mount of the Transfiguration. Spiritual gifts are of value where there are people, ignorant and suffering, whom we can relieve. The desert and the mountain call, but we understand they are but times of refreshing and the entering into the full joy of the Lord must wait until the

time of service ends. But we have had the moments of revelation, of spiritual fullness, and they, we know, are foretastes of the state in which there is fullness of joy.

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*The Eighth Meditation*

## AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL

Let us listen to the words of the Gospel—

"And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness."

Let us picture—

This wilderness. It is very quiet here. No human voice breaks in on the silence, only the voice of nature. "He was with the wild beasts." They prowl about, quiet, friendly, as they have always been with saints. We watch Jesus as the days pass. He grows weaker, more haggard, from hunger and thirst. He has just come from his initiation into his mission, has just been consecrated by the baptism in the Jordan and the descent upon his humanity of the Holy Spirit. The long days pass in meditation on his mission. The period of

fasting draws to an end—and all the time Satan has been waiting and wondering. This man is a mystery to him, and he feels a threat to his domination. But he does not understand him, for he is unable to penetrate the mind of God. There is only one thing he can do—attempt to win this man to his side. So the Man in the wilderness hears the voice of Satan full of subtle suggestion. His mission, he knows, is hard and difficult. The voice suggests that he can avoid the hardness and difficulty. He wants to win the human race? Why not do it by the assertion of miraculous powers? "Command that these stones be made bread." Offer them ease, softness, pleasure. No? Then overwhelm them with wonder. They are a stupid race. They will follow one who strikes and stirs their imagination. Come down out of the air into the Temple courts and the crowd will acclaim you. No? This then—I am the lord of the world. I will confer this lordship on you if you will acknowledge me as your over-lord. See the world and its glory. "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." But there is another way of winning the world, a longer way, the way of the Cross. The Man

will choose that: for in the end that is the only way to success. Satan's promises are false. He is a liar.

Consider, first—

That we must make no mistake as to the reality of the temptation. Jesus Christ is God Incarnate. His person is the second Person of the Blessed Trinity. But he has assumed human nature and that nature is real, not phantasmal. That being God he cannot sin, in no wise detracts from the reality of the temptation. He is like us, "for in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." "For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." The severity of temptation depends on two things. (1) The keenness of our visualization of what may be gained by yielding. (2) Our power to resist what seems to offer what we want, to afford a short-cut to our end. Jesus realized from the first that the Way of the Cross was involved in his mission. He could conquer, but

he must conquer through suffering. Was there an easier, a shorter way? There *was*—to the partial fulfillment of his mission. With the aid of Satan he could reign; he could make men bend to his will. Could he not *save* them in that way—by dominance? No; so he rejects the offer. But the suffering of the temptation, it is apparent, was there, and its rejection did not imply that it did not require great powers of resistance.

Consider, further, that this was in reality the crisis of our Lord's life: this choice of the Way of the Cross by his human will. After this decision has once been made, the way is followed without hesitation. Satan fights and still fights; but the victory, the final victory, was won here in the wilderness. There was potentially won all that follows, all that still follows today. Satan still marshals his hosts, and has many victories. But the Cross wins the fight in whomsoever will assume it. We have only to put behind us the temptation and to accept the Cross, "looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and

hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Consider, second—

That the Christian life is a sharing, a recapitulation, of the experience of Christ. It has, therefore, to meet this experience of temptation. Satan is still alive and active. He deceives many with a denial of his existence. But Jesus Christ was very certain of him in his experience. His teaching is plain. He does not hesitate. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stood not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof." A large element in his ministry of mercy was the healing of those possessed of the devil. His Apostles had no doubt of Satan's power. "Neither give place to the devil." "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." "Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may de-

vour." Neither has the Christian Church ever varied in its teaching. Be ye not deceived in this matter by the scepticism of the modern mind. If we study ourselves carefully, we understand that there are elements in our temptations which come from suggestions from without. I do not understand how any priest, at least, who has had wide experience can doubt of the fact of demoniac possession today. We have personally to deal with the prince of this world, and it only makes our dealing less effective if we under-estimate his power. There is nothing more fatal than to under-estimate this power of temptation. Today Satan is greatly encouraged, I have no doubt. He has induced many important intellectuals to deny the fact of sin and of free-will. The world is perhaps more morally and spiritually dangerous today than it has ever been. Therefore, we need to be alert and watch and pray. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Today, under our modern educational system, it is not so much the flesh that is weak as the spirit. Spiritual insight is being dulled and spiritual

ambitions are being discouraged. The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes remain, but it is the pride of life which is dominant.

Let us, then, pray—

To stand fast in our Lord's teaching, and to be led aside therefrom by no modern disguise of the devil.

> Almighty and everlasting God, who art slow to chide, and swift to bless, whose pity is never-ending, and whose mercy is everlasting, attend to our supplications, and incline thy merciful ears to our prayers, that, being strengthened by thy grace, we may be able to perform thy commands; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

We must distinguish between types of temptation. (1) There is the temptation which has for its object to lead us away from God. These may come direct from Satan or from our own disordered natures. (2) There is the temptation or the testing which is a part of our earthly discipline, and is one means of our development and the proof of our sincerity and converted will.

To take this second form of test. We are spiritual beings, placed in this world for purposes of spiritual education. Like any education, that means that we have to make a series of voluntary choices. The choice that we make represents what we are at a given time.

We are presented by God with the divine ideal of life. This ideal is found in the life and teaching of Jesus. We must adapt the principles there contained to the present circumstances of our life. We have to seek a solution of the problems of conduct in the affirmation of these principles. That is the difficulty of life. This is why the Christian life requires intensive study. If there were some dictionary of conduct in which we could look up all cases and find an answer as to their rightness or wrongness, then the conduct of life would be easy. But there is and can be no such book. Problems as they arise are *our* problems, under *our* circumstances, and have to be decided as such.

We know that this continuous testing is God's providential method for our growth. We know that there is a limit to the temptation which God will permit. "Let no man say

when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man."

Whatever we may mean by the fall of man and by original sin, we at least mean this: that we are born with a nature which induces to sin, which finds sin easy, and in many forms attractive. The child finds play more attractive than study, disorder easier than order, its own will more attractive than obedience. We never altogether outgrow this child state. With all possible discipline and growth, there still remains "the sin which doth so easily beset us."

There is the perpetual inner contest between the flesh and the Spirit, between passion and God. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would. But if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, heresies, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I fore-

warn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they which practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof." The inner contest changes form and object, but however far we advance in this life we never entirely get away from it. There is no escape from temptation in some form. There is no discharge in this war.

We ask why this is? To ask that is to go beyond the possibilities of knowledge, is to ask why God created beings endowed with free-will. But this we can see, that trial through choice is the only mode of growth. To be without temptation would be to be automata.

The struggle, therefore, is a struggle for spiritual evolution. To be carried on successfully, it must not be reduced to passive resistance. There is so much failure due to this conception that we just resist temptation when it presents itself. A merely defensive warfare with evil is doomed to failure. We

can see the results all about us, no doubt in our own experience.

To win we must make counter-attacks. There is in us that which coöperates with temptation, otherwise we could not be tempted. There are hungers, desires, which clamor for satisfactions. The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are *within us:* otherwise, that which can satisfy them would have no attraction. It is these desires, this inner imperfect state of the spirit, which is the true field of our warfare. That which there longs for gratification must be purged and done away. There are certain passions which can easily be brought under control by anyone truly in earnest.

When we pray, Lead us not into temptation, we are really praying for God's coöperation with us in our trial state. But he is already coöperating. He has been coöperating from the beginning. Those who are brought up Christians do not go out unprepared. There was in the first place our baptism: we were born again, "having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth." This is the translation into a spirit-

ual state, in which we grow up. And this state is *confirmed* by the action of the Holy Spirit in the laying on of hands. Further, too, there are other sacraments to strengthen, restore, uphold us. Consider the stress S. John lays on this fact of the rebirth. "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God." "For whosoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith."

Here, then, is our strength—the strength by which we overcome the world; overcome, that is, the complex of influences which are organized, banded together, against the Kingdom of God. We go forth to this battle as Jesus did, prepared by baptism and Confirmation.

If we are to be successful, we must recall that our situation is *unique*. By that I mean that my problems are personal problems; and although much needed light can be thrown upon them by the study of principles and by the study of other lives, in the end personal

problems must be met in a personal way. I may call my temptation by the same name as I call another's temptation, but there are subtle shades that separate mine from all others.

We often recognize these subtle differences and use them as *excuses*. "I do the same things, but—" That is fatal. We should ask ourselves carefully in what our difference consists, to see it not as an excuse, but as something that calls for individual treatment. What is there in me that leads me to desire this that I recognize as sin? Why do I want it? Only when I have answered such questions can I begin to fight hopefully.

The Christian sums up this constant attack against temptation, this invasion of hostile territory, in two words: the Ascetic Life. The Christian life is fundamentally ascetic. It means rigorous restraint and denial. It means the giving up of many things, not because in themselves they are wrong, but because they do not further the end sought—spiritual growth.

To want less is the secret of perfection.

We tend to accumulate things: we depend in modern life more and more on them. Every new invention which makes life smoother

and easier is a new link in the chain that binds us. One thinks sometimes that one might paraphrase, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," as "set us free from our bondage to the comforts of life." We want so many things we do not need. Socrates, going through the market place, rejoiced that there were so many things there that he did not want.

Could any truer description be made of a sincere Christian?

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